

# MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

*- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -*

**Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad**

Sunday, February 14, 2010

♥ Valentine's Day Edition ♥

**4H In Anbar** - The first meeting of 4H in Iraq's western Anbar province was a smashing success. Children participating in the program will receive a sheep and some basic care supplies paid for by the Department of State's Quick Response Fund. Each child is responsible for caring for their own sheep and is supported in this through 4H books, materials, and club meetings. The children will learn recordkeeping, about wool products, the 6 breeds of Iraqi sheep, and different cuts of lamb. Through the program they also learn leadership, community service, and public speaking skills. The students will also acquire pen pals through the University of Florida Extension Service. They look forward to practicing their English.



**USTR Meeting with Minister of Agriculture** – On February 10, Michael J. Delaney, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative, met with Minister of Agriculture Akram Al-Hakim. They discussed Iraq's stalled WTO accession. Mr. Delaney and Agricultural Counselor Ron Verdonk also used the meeting to highlight the role commercially traded agricultural inputs (feed, seeds, and animal genetics) could play in strengthening Iraq's agricultural economy.

**USDA/NRCS Volunteer Departs on a High Note** - Michael Clayton, a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service employee from Kentucky, ends his tour as agricultural expert at Baghdad ePRT South on a high note with a Department of State Meritorious. The award was presented by his Team leader, Senior Foreign Service Officer, Juan Alsace. Michael worked tirelessly to help rebuild the local poultry industry, provide clean water drinking systems to disadvantaged farm families, and nurture farm cooperatives.

**Iraq Buys More U.S. Wheat** – The Grain Board of Iraq recently announced a tender for 100,000 MT of wheat and 60,000 MT of rice. In addition, USDA/Baghdad staff met with the head of the Grain Board to discuss way to make the tendering process more open and more streamlined. On issue is that while the Grain Board reviews bids and makes recommendations, the Minister of Trade or, if it is a large sale, the Council of Ministers, makes the final purchasing decisions. This can delay notification of bidders and lead to uncovered positions in the market.

**Personnel Update** – There are currently 40 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, or embedded with U.S. military units. PRT Wasit Ag Advisor George Stickles arrived February 14.

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